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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

~~DEPARTMENT~~

FOREIGN BROADCAST INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

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BBC Monitoring

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BY THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DATE: 2001

13 September 1946

MEMORANDUM TO: Col. Edwin K. Wright
Central Intelligence Group
Room 2180, New War Department Building

FROM: Director, FBIS

SUBJECT: Future Relations Between FBIS and BBC Monitoring Service.

1. At the present time FBIS receives the product of the British monitoring of European broadcasts. This BBC service makes available to FBIS approximately 250,000 words a day of some of the most important foreign broadcasts. Most of the FBIS coverage of Russian broadcasts, for example, has been obtained through the BBC Monitoring Service. In return for this BBC monitoring, FBIS is not reciprocating with any monitoring service.

2. Last June I discussed with the Director of the BBC Monitoring Service the future working relationship between FBIS and BBC. At that time BBC had not formulated its long-range plans for monitoring and did not expect to have any complete program outlined until sometime this fall. It was agreed at that time that the present arrangement between FBIS and BBC would continue for the rest of the fiscal year 1947, but beginning with fiscal year 1948, BBC would desire remuneration either in cash or in kind.

3. This week we received the following cable from [REDACTED] the FBIS representative in London:

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"41710 Shepherd. Now seems probable that BBC will futurely wish reciprocate their European service for our Far East and Cairo services. In negotiating an important factor will be to what extent we will be able provide BBC toll free transmissions into UK over our circuits to avoid dollar expenditure. Final decision however not yet reached highest level. -- [REDACTED]

4. If BBC requests a file of the FBIS Middle East and Far East monitoring as payment for the European monitoring we receive from BBC, it raises the following policy question:

Should this government depend exclusively on another foreign power for a large segment of one of the principal sources of intelligence material? To do so means no control by FBIS over the monitoring of European broadcasts performed

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by BBC. Even if it is assumed that the British will make available to FBIS every single item it monitors, there can be very legitimately a wide variance in transmitter coverage required by the two different countries. For example, BBC does not monitor the British broadcasts to Germany, but these broadcasts are desired by intelligence officials in this country. Also, since BBC is a private corporation, it may restrict its budget for monitoring to eliminate the coverage of European transmitters that it considers marginal, but which CIG may consider very important.

5. From a purely operational standpoint a reciprocal arrangement between FBIS and BBC would have the following advantages:

a. It would save CIG at least \$1,000,000. This would be the minimum cost of duplicating the present BBC monitoring service if FBIS established an independent listening post on the continent.

b. It would eliminate the necessity of our spending at least a year recruiting and training a staff of experts comparable to the present BBC staff. Due to the scarcity of United States citizens with the unique linguistic skills required by monitoring, the recruiting of a competent European staff would be exceptionally difficult.

6. The operational disadvantages of a reciprocal arrangement are as follows:

a. No control over the BBC monitoring schedule.

b. FBIS, through Signal Corps facilities, would have to file up to 25,000 words per day of Far Eastern monitoring from Washington to London. This would require an additional staff of three editors and three teletypists.

7. FBIS Operational Recommendations:

a. A reciprocity agreement be entered into with BBC for fiscal year 1948, at least.

b. A small supplemental listening post be established by FBIS near Frankfurt as soon as possible to cover the broadcasts required by CIG that are not included in the BBC schedule. With such a station in operation, it would be much easier to expand at a later date if it is decided as a policy matter to discontinue the reciprocity arrangement.

Russell M. Shepherd
Director

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